

SOMALIA: UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING MISSION GONE WRONG

by

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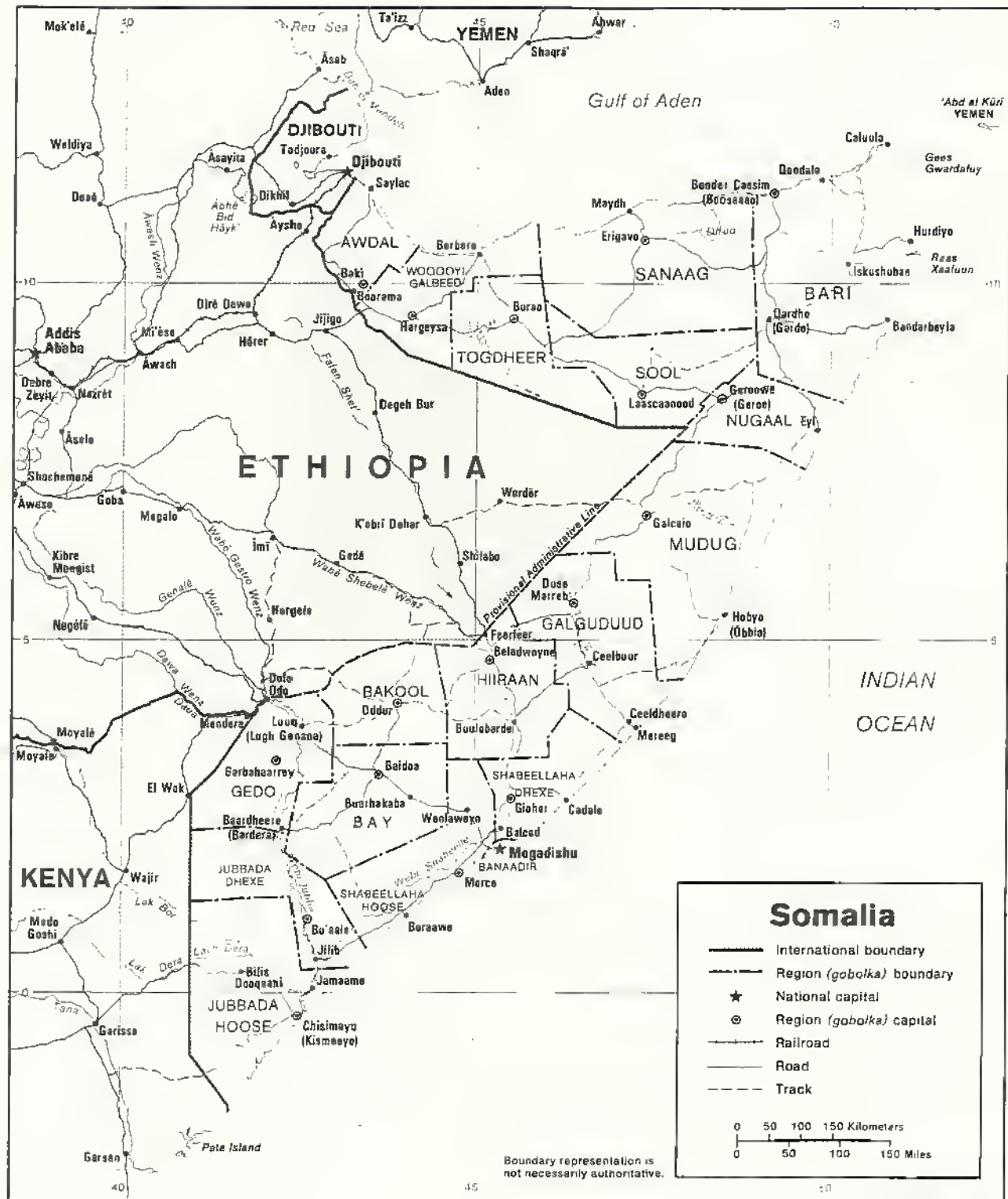
MS 643

UN Peacekeeping Missions Past, Present and Future

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Today, the carnage and chaos of the United Nations (UN) mission in Somalia has been eclipsed by the horrific coup in Rwanda and an impending intervention in Haiti. However, the tragic mistakes and miscalculations made in Somalia need to be reviewed if we are to avert from making them once again. The situation that came to a head in Somalia in 1992 did not manifest itself overnight. In fact, if the UN had demanded multilateral involvement when the first signs of famine arose, the situation may not have deteriorated to the extent it had in 1992. However, both the UN and the United States (U.S.) refused to accept the situation in its early stages and thus ensured a high payment price when the situation escalated. The premise that the Somali people would welcome outside assistance in reestablishing order in their troubled country turned out to be far too simplistic. The U.S.-led Unified Task Force (UNITAF), which began its operation in December 1992, and the UN's second-stage observer mission (UNOSOM II) which took over from UNITAF in spring 1993, both had to confront a range of problems far more intractable than the relatively straightforward tasks of securing airfields and routes for food delivery. Further, the UN allowed itself to be perceived as taking sides and causing casualties in executing Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's vengeful pursuit of General Mohamed Farah Aideed. The UN lost all credibility as a neutral broker. Worst of all, the UN stands guilty in its incompetent and unfocused mission strategy in Somalia -- a strategy which has damaged its ability to pursue other global peace missions.

How did Somalia come to its current unraveling? In January 1991, after 21 years of dictatorship, Somali's president, Siad Barre, fled Somalia. Troops under General Aideed set off in pursuit of Siad Barre, while others, under Ali Mahdi Mohamed, a wealthy Mogadishu businessman, remained in the capital and declared themselves leaders of a new government. During 1991 the struggle between Aideed, chairman of the USC, and Ali Mahdi intensified. On November 17th, a full-scale civil war erupted. The fighting was so severe in Mogadishu that most of the remaining infrastructure of the city was totally destroyed. Virtually every building in the central city was ripped apart by artillery shelling; bridges and water lines were blown up; underground utility lines were dug up for the copper wiring they contained. {21:900-901; 23:110-115; 38:31; 57:230-231; 72:11}

Further complicating matters was a lingering drought which drove people from their land in a futile search for food, exposing them even more directly to the ongoing violence. Civil war and drought combined to trigger the acute famine that seared the land by the spring of 1992. Somalia has had no functioning government since January 1991 to assist the people with survival needs. As early as January 1992, Andrew Natsios, director of the U.S. government's international humanitarian assistance efforts, described the Somali famine as "the greatest humanitarian emergency in the world." {80:50} And the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention confirmed that the

mortality rates were "among the highest ever documented by a population survey among famine-affected civilians." {16:A17} The Somali tragedy far worse than the 1984-1985 Ethiopian famine -- the universal benchmark for incomprehensible human suffering. The Ethiopian famine was somewhat limited to specific geographic pockets. In contrast, in July 1992 the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was estimating that 95 percent of the people in Somalia suffered from malnutrition, with 70 percent enduring severe malnutrition. [10] The famine engulfed vast regions of the country and by September 1992, the ICRC estimated that 1.5 million individuals faced imminent starvation with three times as many remaining totally dependent upon external food assistance. At least 350,000 Somalis perished from severe malnutrition and its associated diseases in 1992 {16:A17}, while well over 900,000 fled to squalid relief camps in Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti, and Yemen. By November, some 80 percent of relief commodities were being confiscated by bandits. The rising anarchy and chaos were diminishing the prospects that the relief effort could abate the starvation which was claiming in excess of a thousand victims a day. Relief that could have reached the dying was not delivered more because Somalia fell through the cracks of the UN system then to the marauding looters. Despite these observations, the UN Security Council did not feel compelled to take swift action. But public outrage at the lurid scenes from Mogadishu and Baidoa freed (or, perhaps, forced) the President Bush to catapult over questions of mandates and authorities to take decisive unilateral action. The "CNN factor" simply did not allow the UN and the international community to continue avoiding action as the situation deteriorated. {3:24-25; 9:22-23; 11:52-54; 20:162-163; 21:901; 23:119-115; 26:11; 59:612; 78:384-385}

The U.S.-led UNITAF, which had deployed approximately 37,000 troops in southern and central Somalia, {83:6} did have substantial success in getting food to hundreds of thousands of Somalis who had been close to starvation, and it thereby saved innumerable lives. {64:14} This success also coaxed additional forces from other countries, deepening peacekeeping support. Within the first few months of 1993, preparations for the transfer of responsibility from UNITAF to the UN went forward as planned, on the expectation that the UN force would entail a military component of 20,000 troops and an additional 8,000 logistical personnel and 2,800 civilian staff. {83:9-10} In late March the Security Council authorized the mandate for a UN force (UNOSOM II) for an initial period through October 31, 1993. {87:240-242} Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali designated Jonathan Howe, a retired U. S. admiral, as his special representative in Somalia; Lieutenant-General Cevik Bir of Turkey became force commander of UNOSOM II. {9:10; 19:54; 25:25-26; 34:A1; 83:9-10}

In early December 1992, following a United Nations Security Council vote authorizing force to rescue both starving Somalis and a highly imperiled relief operation President George Bush ordered a dramatic U.S. military intervention into the searing famine and advanced anarchy of Somalia.

Security Council Resolution 794 of December 3, 1992, had articulated the primary objective of the initiative: "to establish a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations in Somalia as soon as possible." {20:162-163; 88:613} Above and beyond the immediate and massive humanitarian needs, it would be essential to restore stability and order in order to ensure the nation's long-term survival. The chaotic, violent Somali environment of 1993 offered no ready path toward that goal. The mandate to use "all necessary means" {88:613} to establish a secure environment for relief operations could be interpreted to authorize compulsory disarmament of recalcitrant factions, but UN member states had differing views on the wisdom of such a course of action. Resolution 794 had likewise called on all parties "to promote...reconciliation and political settlement in Somalia," but had laid down no blueprint for that program. {1:4-5; 2:19; 10:11; 12:18-19; 24:713-717; 32:927; 39:30; 44:7-8; 45:14; 82:22-25}

Resolution 794 catapulted the Security Council into a radically different stance regarding collective interventions for humanitarian principles -- perhaps not unintentionally as a precursor to an expanded intervention in Bosnia or Iraq. Meanwhile, fifteen Somali political movements took part in meetings in January and March 1993 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which were aimed at bringing about national reconciliation and reconstruction. Those meetings produced both a fragile political accord and an agreement by all parties to cooperate with UNOSOM in disarmament. {14:22-23} Lawless acts of violence continually beleaguered the UN peacekeepers, however they lacked the focus that later attacks contained. (52; 92) The same resolution also called for UN assistance to the people of Somalia in "the re-establishment of national and regional institutions and civil administration in the entire country and in "the restoration and maintenance of peace, stability and law and order." {87:240-242}

Over the ensuing months, tensions mounted as Genera Aideed and his Somali National Alliance (SNA) came to view UNOSOM and its disarmament activities as an impediment to achievement of their own objectives. {92} In May, the U.S. handed official control of the mission to the UN. {13:32; 31:36} A fatal confrontation on June 5, 1993, produced a new round of controversy over the objectives and tactics of the international involvement. On that day, twenty-four Pakistani soldiers serving under UNOSOM command were ambushed and killed and an additional fifty-six were wounded, some while distributing food to Somali citizens and others while returning from inspection of a weapons storage site. {49} The Security Council strongly condemned the unprovoked attack as part of "a calculated and premeditated series of cease-fire violations to prevent by intimidation UNOSOM II from carrying out its mandate." {86:467-468} In a significant but controversial directive, the Security council called on the secretary-general "to take all necessary

measures against all those responsible for the armed attacks...including to secure the investigation of their actions and their arrest and detention for prosecution, trial and punishment." {4:207-209; 28:7; 69:11-12; 86:467-468}

A UN investigation subsequently found "clear and convincing evidence" that General Aideed had authorized the attack, that his faction had executed it, and that the attack violated multiple aspects of Somali criminal law and of international law. {86:467-468} The same investigation also charged the SNA with actions "consciously designed...to cause the wounding or killing of non-combatants," (27) in violation of the central principle of international humanitarian law. In the meantime, the instruction to UNOSOM II to pursue efforts to arrest and detain the perpetrators of the attack intensified the confrontation between the UN and General Aideed, and also led to serious disagreements among UN member states over the course of action that UNOSOM should be following. In particular, Italy -- a contributor of a substantial UNOSOM contingent, and a former colonial power in Somalia -- urged a change in course to favor political dialogue over pursuit of Aideed, and threatened to withdraw its contingent if the confrontational posture continued. {49; 73:6-7; 76; 91:62; 92}

Another devastating clash occurred on October 3, 1993, resulting in the deaths of eighteen U.S. peacekeeping troops and at least seventy other U.S. casualties, as well as the gruesome televised images of an American captive under interrogation and the body of a dead American soldier being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. Tragically, the same incident produced an even higher toll among Somali civilians -- possibly as many as 300 dead and 700 wounded. As some congressional leaders called for prompt withdrawal of U.S. troops and public opinion turned decidedly against U.S. involvement, the Clinton administration struggled to redefine and explain the U.S. and UN objectives. President Clinton announced that he would increase the U.S. deployment in the near term but would also set a firm date of March 31, 1994, for a complete U.S. withdrawal. At the same time, other troop contributing countries were also reconsidering their commitments and the UN shifted away from Resolution 837's mandate to punish the attackers of peacekeeping forces, toward a policy of political isolation of those elements; and second, toward the acceptance of futility of isolation and the inevitability of working with those same elements in order to achieve a durable political solution. {7:40-46; 13:32-37; 23:109-123; 37:43; 41:12; 43:497-498; 47:33-37; 53:36-39; 70:3-4; 89:30-31}

The events of 1993 underscored the inherently contradictory task for an external intervention into a situation of chaos. UNITAF and UNOSOM II had to work toward establishing conditions of

minimum order, without at the same time antagonizing powerful forces who could command the loyalty of substantial segments of Somali society. Although many congressmen wailed that the UN had changed the mission from *humanitarian aid* to *security* or *nation-building*, the reality is that in places like Somalia there is no such thing as a *pure* humanitarian mission. {13:35-36; 31:41} The common portrayal in the Western media of the clan leaders as "warlords" obscured the origins of their power bases in the Somali clan structure. {48:37} The effort to disarm them, in order to end the looting, soon took on quite different overtones, which Somali clan leaders (especially General Aideed) would naturally have interpreted as a direct challenge to their own authority. Yet without the cooperation of those same leaders, the objectives of the international intervention could not realistically be achieved. {27; 85:686-687}

But how had the UN miscalculated the Somali response? The uneasy peace of the Cold War period was preserved at least in part because of deterrence -- knowledge on both sides of a potential conflict that hostile acts would trigger a costly, even devastating response. The legal structure of the UN Charter bolstered deterrence by de-legitimizing first use of trans-boundary force and legitimizing self-defense. {82:3-5} Deterrence in the broad sense always operates alongside other strategies, including efforts to eliminate the underlying causes of unacceptable "behavior" in a state. Just as every modern society recognizes that the threat of punishment is an essential part of the mix of crime prevention strategies, international society also must continue to rely on the threat of imposing unwelcome costs on those who may decide to violate community norms. {54:27; 56:A13}

In Somalia, the signals sent by the major powers made it appear they no longer had sufficient interest to warrant a prediction that they would react to outbreaks of violence, emboldening local forces to seek their objectives forcibly. The lesson to be learned from this is that if unacceptable behavior is to be deterred, the international community must clarify its expectations in at least two significant ways. First, it must identify the thresholds that will elicit an international response if crossed, to include specific triggering points correlated to enforcement of norms and obligations. Second, the international community must clarify what responses will be forthcoming in the event that the thresholds so identified are crossed, for, if by analogy to domestic law enforcement, the probability of deterring the unacceptable behavior is directly correlated to the likelihood that adverse consequences will be imposed, as well as to the costliness of the consequences in proportion to what the target hopes to gain from the violation. {26:11; 58:877-884}

Various UN officials exaggerated security concerns to excuse their agencies' own scant presence and faulty performance, factors that in turn contributed to the very real level of violence prevalent by mid-1992. The "unvarnished history" of the UN's role in Somalia is a tragic one of

opportunities missed and strategic and operational blunders not justified by situational realities. Western donor governments did little better, and African entities -- in particular the Organization of African Unity (OAU) -- contributed virtually nothing to efforts to avoid calamity. "Only the non-governmental relief organizations, all underprepared and ill-equipped for the roles forced upon them, survive scrutiny with their honor intact." {23:109-110}

The Security Council's evasion of decisive action ultimately led, in July 1992, to an exasperated outburst from the secretary-general, who was moved to charge that members more concerned with "the rich man's war" in the Balkans than with the situation in Somalia were employing "a naked double standard." {67:A1} Unfortunately for the Council, there was no plausible denial of his charges. The embarrassment stemming from the secretary-generals' outburst led to UN and donor governments sudden galvanization on the Somali famine, including the August launching of food airlifts and September arrival of peacekeeping forces -- some six months after initial consideration by the Security Council. Somalia's children were dying, and the world was seeing it live. However, Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali also shares the blame. By the time the new secretary-general assumed office, the inadequacy of the UN diplomatic efforts of James Jonah and relief operations in the field in responding to the realities of Somalia were more than apparent. Yet, Boutros-Ghali failed to designate an overall coordinator for the UN in response to the crisis, to grant strong authority to Eliasson's unit (or, seemingly, even to insist that the DHA take on *any* role in Somalia), to support his first special representative in-country, or to replace him with a diplomat enjoying either much support or a strong mandate. Unfortunately, these airlifts were portrayed by Aided supporters as the arrival of "an invasion." But, the high-profile U.S. attention to the Somalia famine did change the dynamics of the international response, quickly embarrassing European and other donor governments, as well as the UN, into taking a more determined approach. {21:900-901; 50:32-37}

Although the Somali's carry much blame for their own situation, the passive accomplices to their misery are the officials of the UN. Most egregiously, the UN was essentially absent from Somalia. The UN withdrew from Mogadishu shortly before the January 1991 flight of Siad Barre and stayed away until August 1991. A security incident in early September resulted in the reevacuation of the skeleton staff that had returned three weeks earlier. Criticism led to UNICEF's reestablishing offices in late 1991, but the UN agencies continued to suffer greatly from the absence of senior, qualified personnel and adequately staffed offices. The concerns over security that ostensibly prevented the UN from operating in Somalia during this period contrast with the stance of the ICRC, the International Medical Corps, Save the Children Fund/U.K., Medecins sans Frontieres, and SOS (an Austrian nonprofit agency): these organizations *increased* staff because of the extraordinary needs

and the shortage of UN relief workers. Moreover, decision-makers did not accord it the priority that "the greatest humanitarian emergency in the world" required if catastrophe was to be avoided. Somalia's famine developed over several years as UN and Security Council members ignored the clear signals of imminent disaster. No longer strategically important after the end of the Cold War, Somalia was addressed with neglect, denial, evasion of responsibility and a lack of a coherent strategy from the UN. {36:22-23; 54:27-28; 56:A13; 68:16}

"What supports an assessment that much of the UN's contribution in Somalia was initially grossly incompetent, undisciplined, and unfocused?" {23:114} Damning assessments of the UN role in Somalia emanate from relief workers directly engaged in the Somali crisis. Professionals in the humanitarian assistance community, journalists, and even the more candid UN officials involved. {65:A16} The pronouncements, supported by an investigation of factual evidence, stem from a series of UN blunders and the UN's basic failure to engage seriously in efforts to deal with the crisis when such engagement arguably would have diffused its intensity. {23:114-115}

The absence of country expertise directly resulted in the debacle of Under Secretary James Jonah's January 1992 mission to Mogadishu. In response to criticisms for its neglect of Somalia -- the ICRC created a stir by issuing highly unusual public criticisms of the UN's performance in Somalia {60:1} -- the UN began formulating plans for a diplomatic initiative in December 1991. Jonah was dispatched to Mogadishu on January 3-5, to meet with General Aideed and with Ali Mahdi, to negotiate a cease-fire in the civil war, and secure the safe passage of relief commodities. Two clans neutral in the Aideed/Ali Mahdi clash (the Hawadle and the Murasade) offered to escort Jonah to both Aideed and Ali Mahdi headquarters, and to serve as local peacekeepers. {27; 49; 76; 92} Jonah, apparently unaware of the existence of neutral elements in Mogadishu, made no arrangements to accept the offer. He then fell into a trap set by Aideed. Aideed's forces shelled the airport to prevent Jonah's UN plane from landing and had it diverted to an airstrip at Balidogley under the general's control; there, Jonah was met by Aideed. Aideed took him on highly visible and extensive tours of territory under his control. When the Jonah party neared the planned point of crossing into Ali Mahdi's northern section of Mogadishu, an angry Ali Mahdi opened an artillery barrage. Jonah fled to Nairobi. The next morning he flew to northern Mogadishu to (very) briefly visit Ali Mahdi, then publicly announced that Ali Mahdi had agreed to UN intervention in the crisis and that General Aideed stood as the obstacle. Ali Mahdi immediately seconded Jonah's comments, seeing them as underscoring the legitimacy of his interim presidency. Aideed predictably became angry and more distrustful -- and more violent. This anger was articulated immediately with the shutdown of the airport for ten days, effectively blocking ongoing food airlifts. But far worse than this, the UN lost its

particular advantage of being a neutral broker had been severely eroded and the war continued for another two months. {23:113-116, 118}

The UN hierarchy had apparently absorbed no lessons on the finer points of negotiating in Mogadishu's internecine battles when its next high-profile delegation arrived on February 5, 1992. No clan leaders or elders were invited to discussions with Aideed and Ali Mahdi about proposed peace talks in New York. That the UN apparently accorded the clans little standing which showed a clear lack of understanding of Somali societal structure. The meeting took place at UN headquarters on February 12 and 13, and the principles of a cease-fire were discussed. The Somali parties returned to Mogadishu, where the details, such as they were, were hammered out and agreed to by March 3. Typical of these UN errors was its failure to take advantage of the March 1992 cease-fire. This failure rests at the very center of the flawed external involvement in the crisis and mirrors numerous other opportunities missed. The Security Council's dithering and its relief agencies' squandering of valuable time and opportunities paralleled the floundering of the UN's senior diplomats in the field during this period. {30:41; 42:13-19}

In contrast with the private relief agencies in Somalia, UNICEF and the other UN relief agencies were actually doing very little in the field. Repeated requests to UNICEF from the private relief agencies operating in Mogadishu and elsewhere for medicines and medical supplies went unheeded. Relief commodities that were delivered repeatedly went to arbitrary locations without UNICEF's consulting other agencies; the result was false expectations and unnecessary pressures as desperate people gathered to await further deliveries that never materialized. Save the Children/U.K., a relatively small private relief agency, delivered more food to Somalia in 1992 than did UNICEF. Meanwhile, for some nine months, the United Nations Development Programme, the traditional coordinator of UN relief and development agencies, left untapped \$68 million budgeted for Somalia *for lack of a signature* from the nonexistent Somali government. Efforts to obtain a waiver of the signature requirement commenced only after the press reported stinging criticism of the UN Somali relief operation from the director of Save the Children/U.K. {23:116-117; 33:9; 55:44-45; 90:35}

As crisis turned to catastrophe in Somalia, the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) remained largely unengaged in these fitful relief efforts. This theoretically central UN office had no discernible role whatsoever in mounting an effective response to the famine, though it had been formed early in 1992 for just such a task as was unfolding in Somalia. {29:31-32}

The Security Council was not totally oblivious to the deteriorating situation in Somalia in 1992 and busied itself with a flurry of resolutions, following a long paucity of action. These resolutions

before December are most notable, however, for their lack of resolve and for their inconsistency when compared to its actions regarding the Kurdish situation and the Balkan crisis that the great powers were reluctant to focus on Somalia was unmistakable. {60:1} For example, Resolution 773 called upon the secretary-general to increase humanitarian assistance and to work with the OAU and Arab League to seek a cease-fire, establishing an international arms embargo on Somalia. Likewise, Resolution 746 (March) called upon all parties to abide by the cease-fire agreed to that month, but specified no measures to make that goal more likely. Resolution 751 (April) authorized a force of 50 UN observers to monitor the cease-fire and "in principle" a UN security force of 550 to be deployed. This deployment, minuscule as it would have been, remained one in principle; in early September the U. S. Air Force (USAF) airlifted 500 UN troops into Mogadishu as part of the initial late summer mobilization on the crisis. Resolution 767 (July) called upon all parties in Somalia to cooperate in the deployment of the security forces, and resolution 775 (late August) increased the authorized deployment to 3,500. (The secretary-general's special representative in Mogadishu, Mohamed Sahnoun, had requested 7,000 troops; in any case, the UN security force remained at 500 -- its level when the 24,000 American troops came ashore in December.) {71:13-15; 84:13-16; 87:240-242}

As the United States sought to end its large military presence in Somalia in early 1993, the secretary-general had yet to indicate clearly the authority over UN efforts there that each of his coordinators would exercise, or exactly how he was going to coordinate all of his coordinators. {62:20-23} Furthermore, increasingly U.S. public resentment over the disarray exhibited within the UN's mission in Somalia weakened Boutros-Ghali's position on an expanded and lengthened mandate for the American troops present in the country. Despite Operation RESTORE HOPE's considerable success in protecting the delivery of relief commodities to the hungry Somalis, tensions between U.S. government and UN officials flared as the proper role and length of stay for the American military forces and the preparations for the UN management of the next phase of the response were contested. Such tensions were predictable, given the Security Council's vague mandate for the forces, the Bush administration's unrealistic predictions concerning the duration of the American military presence in Somalia, the continued lack of coherence in the UN response, and the uncertainty of resources and authorities to be provided to any successor UN peacekeeping force. {75:19; 77:138-154; 80:50; 81:20-24}

U.S. officials accused the secretary-general of deliberately stalling the transfer of responsibility to UN peacekeeping forces because of reluctance to assume the financial and political costs of the operation -- though without much visible American mobilization to obtain support for a UN operation. UN officials countered with comments concerning American arrogance {46:A10} and

more relevant concerns that once the large American force departed, the country's warlords and militias would return in force and overwhelm UN peacekeepers. {4:209; 5:26-27; 22:42-43; 40:4}

The tough and shrewd U.S. special envoy, Robert Oakley, a retired foreign service officer and former ambassador to Somalia, quickly became established as the dominant international player in Mogadishu as looters were being disarmed and warlords and elders prodded to discuss a national reconciliation process. Oakley eclipsed UN Special Representative Kittani as a force, illustrating the UN's lack of credibility within Somalia. Oakley's candid expressions of frustration at the UN's slowness in organizing the peacekeeping force and a national police force -- the United States undertook the latter task after the UN failed to proceed on such an obvious priority {63:47; 66a:A21} --were meant to manipulate the UN into a more proactive stance. Meanwhile, State Department officials were at the same time indicating through the press that the United States had begun to withdraw troops from Somalia, in part to "nudge the UN off center." {45a:A23} The U.S.-UN tensions on display surrounding Somalia are indicative of a larger struggle and the expanding U. S. annoyance with Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali. {79:567-568}

In the wake of the Somali debacle, the UN (and the Security Council in particular) has been compelled to examine a number of broad policy issues and operational modalities if it is to avert the same failures and tragic consequences elsewhere. In the same vein in October 1993, President Clinton stated that the criteria which required solid answers to elicit future U.S. involvement in peacekeeping operations were: (1) Is there a clear threat?; (2) Does the proposed mission have clear objectives; (3) How much will it cost?; and (4) Can we envision a clear terminal point? {51:18-19}

The UN's mission's in Somalia -- UNITAF and UNOSOM II -- have been plagued with incompetence, apathy, and incoherent focus. With such a foundation, it is little wonder that many innocent Somalis and UN Peacekeepers have lost their lives in this turbulent episode. If not for the United States' initiative to intervene to stem the starvation, it is doubtful that the UN would have ever responded to this tragedy. {6:32; 27; 35; 61:23}

Today, the UN is a seriously discredited presence in Somalia, with echoes resounding in similar venues worldwide. {17:18-20} However, despite the lack of demonstrated UN competence or credibility, it is clearly advantageous for reconstruction to be a multilateral process. The UN will need to move swiftly and convincingly to regain credibility following its performance in Somalia. And the U. S. government, despite its public antipathy toward perceived UN reluctance to assume responsibility in Somalia and elsewhere, must move in its own interest and for the common good to help the UN gain that credibility. The U.S. will have to establish stronger guidelines as to when and

where it will intervene to feed starving children, restore law and order, or promote democracy. Former President Reagan, ironically, has already suggested a principle for the new era, proposing "nothing less than a human velvet glove backed by a steel fist of military force" to enforce humanitarian objectives by means of a permanent UN "army of conscience." {75a:E1} The Clinton administration will have to propose its own principles before crises impose others. {18:21-22}

The first question that has to be examined is that of cease-fires being in place before the introduction of UN peacekeeping forces. Such application gives any number of minor players potential veto power over the UN action required to assist nonparticipants in civil strife situations. The failure to move on the opportunity to introduce international peacekeepers into Somalia in March 1992 contributed to heightened levels of violence. Additionally, the imposition of this criterion forced the UN to act as if all of Somalia were engulfed in Mogadishu's extreme circumstances, contrary to the reality. Linking initiatives on the humanitarian program front to concurrence to agreements on the positioning of peacekeepers in Somalia was a major mistake, and the UN paid a heavy price as it squandered opportunities to exploit positives -- the relative lack of both violence and food insecurity in key areas. {36:22}

Also, the Security Council must construct new guidelines concerning the acceptable safety risks for UN personnel intervening in internal conflict. Much of the UN's problem in Somalia stemmed from the lack of on-the-ground expertise following the evacuation of its staff, the stated justification for this measure being staff safety. This claim struck many as disingenuous, and Under Secretary Jonah's assertion that the lack of "insurance" for staff was a primary reason for not having a UN presence in-country underscores the necessity of more responsible guidelines in this area. {6:33; 35; 65:A16}

Further, the UN must look toward internal reform to recapture both credibility. The bungled response to Somalia has dramatically exposed the extent of its ineptitude {15:A1; 66:A1} and it is clear that Somalia is but one example of the UN's failing to meet its obligations for reasons other than financial constraints. As institutional shortcomings increasingly come to light, the world public may not be as forgiving as it has been in the past.

Beyond bureaucratic consolidation and coordination, the humanitarian reform commission at the UN should be charged with identifying the needed strengthening of mandates and authorities required for collective involvement in internal conflicts, including the terms for asserting the rights of survival over sovereignty. Notwithstanding the institutional bias of the UN toward governments --

even when governments "sovereignty" public outcry from repeated exposure to innocent children starving forces a new interpretation of "sovereign." {83:12}

"Ultimately, the most important question is that of accountability. Greater accountability needs to be established now at the international level." {23:122-123} Without such accountability the international community will not absorb the horrific lessons from the current Somali catastrophe. Instead, the same stories of neglect, evasion of responsibility, and lack of determination will lead to future massive suffering in Haiti, Tajikistan, Rwanda, and other lands not likely to make smooth transition in the post-Cold War era. {23:123}

Failure of the UN to act now guarantees a far costly price to bear in the future.

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